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# Ikebana:

A Creative Model for  
Interdisciplinary  
Pedagogy

Presentation at  
Canadian Craft  
Conference - Making  
Education

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# A Theoretical Perspective

“The words 'collaborative learning' describe a situation.. which would trigger learning mechanisms, **but there is no guarantee that the expected interactions will actually occur**. Hence, a general concern is to develop ways to increase the probability that some types of interaction occur”.

(Dillenbourg, 1999:5)







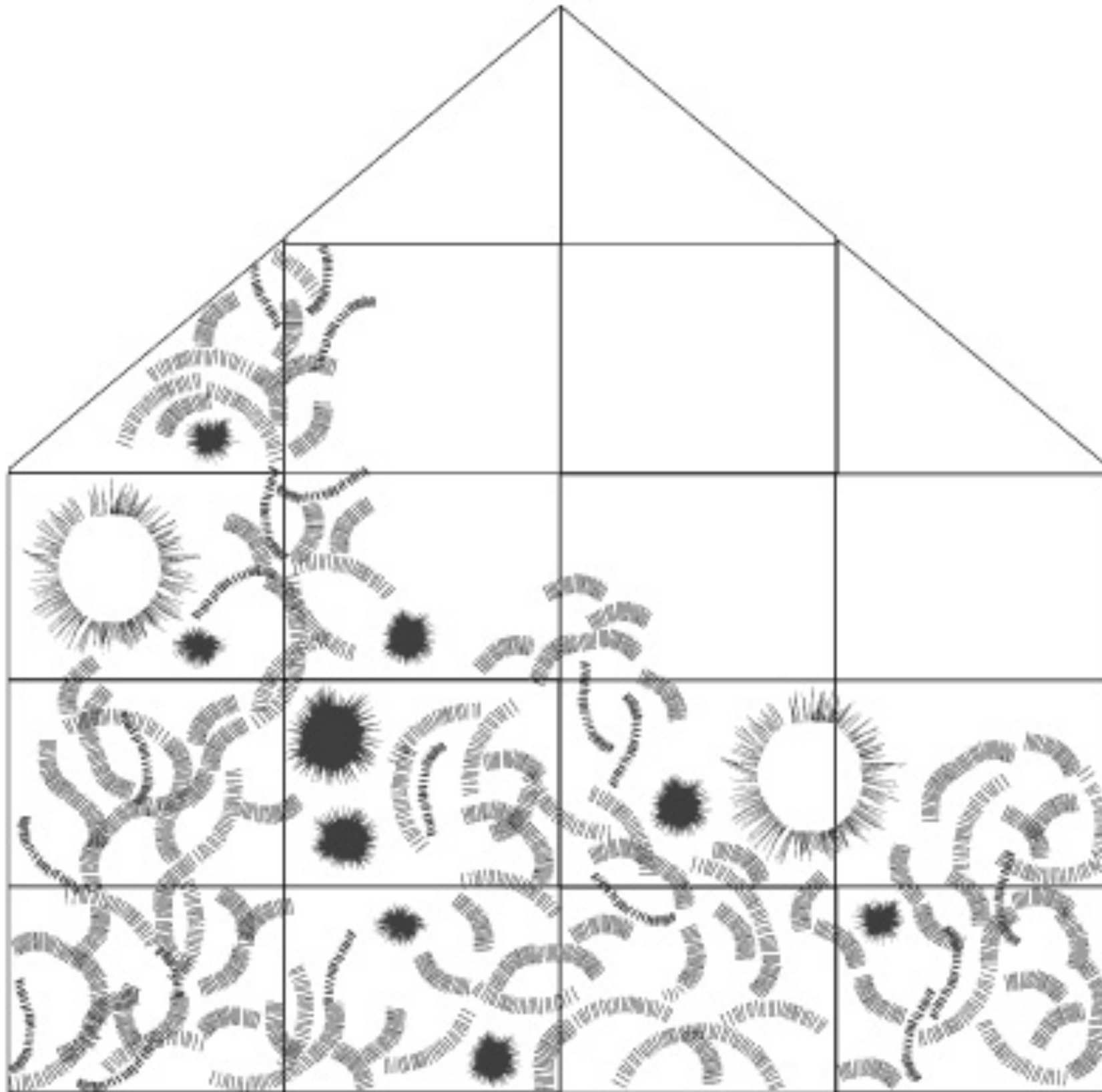


Image of Collaborative Greenhouse Glass Design by Rachel Kelly 2010





Image of Public Residency by Rachel Kelly at Ruthin Craft Centre in 2016





## The Teaching Context:

Undergraduate  
Collaborative  
Interdisciplinary  
Teaching Units.

**“I don’t like it,  
(working in a group)  
but I guess it is good  
for us to do. We’ll  
have to get used to it’  
L5 Textile Student”**

(Goodman 2016).

Sarah Mann's 2001 paper **Alternative Perspectives on the Student Experience: alienation and engagement** explores how alienation has become a defining feature of undergraduate student experience.

(Mann 2001:7)



## HEA Student and Staff Partnership Award 2013 – Winning entry



### University of Sheffield - ‘Risk, Imagination, Responsibility and Support’: Collaborative module design in practice

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### A brief description of the partnership work

This partnership was about embodying the radical ideals of arts and humanities education as persistent critical dialogue and intellectual possibility. For two years, University of Sheffield Arts and Humanities (A&H) undergraduate and postgraduate students, academics, and professional services, invited speakers and members of the public have taken part in an evolving conversation about the value or otherwise of the arts and humanities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This process led to the key partnership work detailed here: the design of a module by a team of staff and students, led by the SALTs with support from the ADLT.

‘Interdisciplinary Research in Practice in the Arts and Humanities’ is a 20 credit module, open to any A&H

undergraduate, who will learn with and from other members of

the university about research theory and practice. All

participants will collaborate on a student-led research project,

supervised by graduate student researchers, with the results

presented and discussed at an end-of module colloquium, open

to the public.

This partnership evolved out of a workshop attended by

members of the Faculty at every stage of an academic career

from 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate to Professor. Participants there

reflected on key ideas presented at a preceding public forum at

which four invited academics and artists spoke on the topic

“Against Value in the Arts and Humanities”.<sup>1</sup> The forum itself

offered a critical reflection by A&H academics, students and

interested publics in response to an event organized by

colleagues and students the preceding year, aiming to isolate

“The Value of the Arts and Humanities”.<sup>2</sup> “Against Value” in its

#### AFTER “AGAINST VALUE IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES” – A DISCUSSION Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April 1pm–4pm (with Lunch), Portobello Centre, Room PC-SR851

##### 1. Creative/artistic strategies – and the study of the humanities

*Do these strategies drawn from creative and artistic practice help you as a student? Are there others?*

- These are six forms of creative discussion listed in descending order of enjoyment and increasing order of difficulty. Paraphrased from Tim Exelbels, at *Against Value in the Arts and Humanities*
1. The kind where you have one piece of material... and you are trying to derive or grow more material from it.
  2. The kind where you have several pieces of material and you are debating about how they are or are not the same.
  3. The kind where you have several pieces of material in blocks and you are trying to arrange these blocks to make an order.
  4. The kind where you have some material that you like but you are trying to ignore it temporarily in order, hopefully, to get some other unrelated material.
  5. The kind where you have no material at all, or you do have some but you are absolutely weary of it and you are trying to think of anything at all.
  6. The kind where you have no material at all and you are reflecting on the very (im)possibility of having material at all at this point.

##### 2. Student versus Consumer

*How can members of this university resist consumerism and maintain an identity as students and learners?*

“This surplus (dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and not necessarily linked to productivity) within the surplus (dedicated to education) has been identified by the neo-liberal ruling class as a surplus which is surplus to requirements.” (Peter Thompson, at *Against Value in the Arts and Humanities*)

Staff and students are said to be “members” of the university: value lies in collectivity. And yet, in the way that Universities are organized students are oftentimes treated more like individual consumers. Borrowing from the state to fund education is fully institutionalized; you are repeatedly audited for feedback on your experience using the methods of consumer surveys; courses are broken up into discrete modules and you make choices hoping to win one of a set number of places; the only defined social space in Jessop West is a canteen in which you must purchase products to congregate.

##### 3. Learning and Teaching for Uncertainty

*What forms of teaching offer the most fertile environment for tentative, unpredictable and not pre-determined kinds of thinking from students and teachers?*

Chalk and Talk; Sage on the Stage; ‘Hectorin’ from the Lectern. Many practices of teaching can formalize an attitude to education that insists on established values and resists the uncertain voice of student (or teacher).

“Rather than focusing more and more on the transferal of the correct knowledge with the proper value, I would argue that democratic education is most defensible when the arts and humanities take the side of ignorance.” (Emile Bijlman, at *Against Value in the Arts and Humanities*)

Worksheet produced by academic staff after attending the public forum to encourage discussion at the “Against Value” workshop

<sup>1</sup> Information is available here: <http://tinyurl.com/cnsjoh4>; and the event is archived here: <http://tinyurl.com/c746mdv>.

<sup>2</sup> For information see: <http://tinyurl.com/cmm8ac9>.



“ I felt, as we were all learning, that there wasn't any pressure to do things in a certain way, or any pressure if things were done a little wrong. Everyone was learning new skills in a calm environment” (Respondent 1 2014).

Image Source Elizabeth Kealey-Morris 2014





“It is saddening to consider that students have such difficulty with collaboration, the myth of the single genius is still too strong and education is generally a very individualising experience” state Bianca Elzenbaumer & Fabio Franz 2017.









“Shared understanding can be viewed as an effect, if the goal is really that a group builds the common grounds necessary to perform well together in the future”.(Dillenbourg, 1999:12).





Hierarchical structures impact upon the teaching and learning context which supports collaborative learning. In removing such structures and when students and staff work side by side as equals outside of the formal University teaching context, a shared learning space is created encompassing the *Lebenswelt* or Lifeworld.

(Edmund Husserl 1859-1938)

Image Source: Rachel Kelly 2017





A Collaborative 'Paper Reading' session... **“Having to explain to non-specialists what you do is the most difficult and helpful challenge to face in any project”**

(Knott, Hunter and Elzenbaumer 2010:67)

Image Source: Rachel Kelly 2016



# Ikebana Learning Tool: Concept Visuatisation



Illustration by Rachel Kelly 2017

# Methodology

1. Subject- Shin, Object- Soe and base- Utsuwa (Ohara 2015)  
Space and object help visualise practice to support reflection for assessment.
2. Use of organic, ambiguous or disconnected materials to create coherent outcomes.
3. The manner of “ad-hoc or bricoleur qualities” (Adamson 2007:89) working in congruity to create rather than design.
4. Vygotskian More Knowledgeable Other(1978) a role where the tutor becomes an overt participant.







Creative thinking and learning within collaborative activity takes place **during** action and is **pre-reflective**, as Heidegger (1927) in *Being and Time* considers “ready-at-hand” and “present-at-hand” knowing to be.



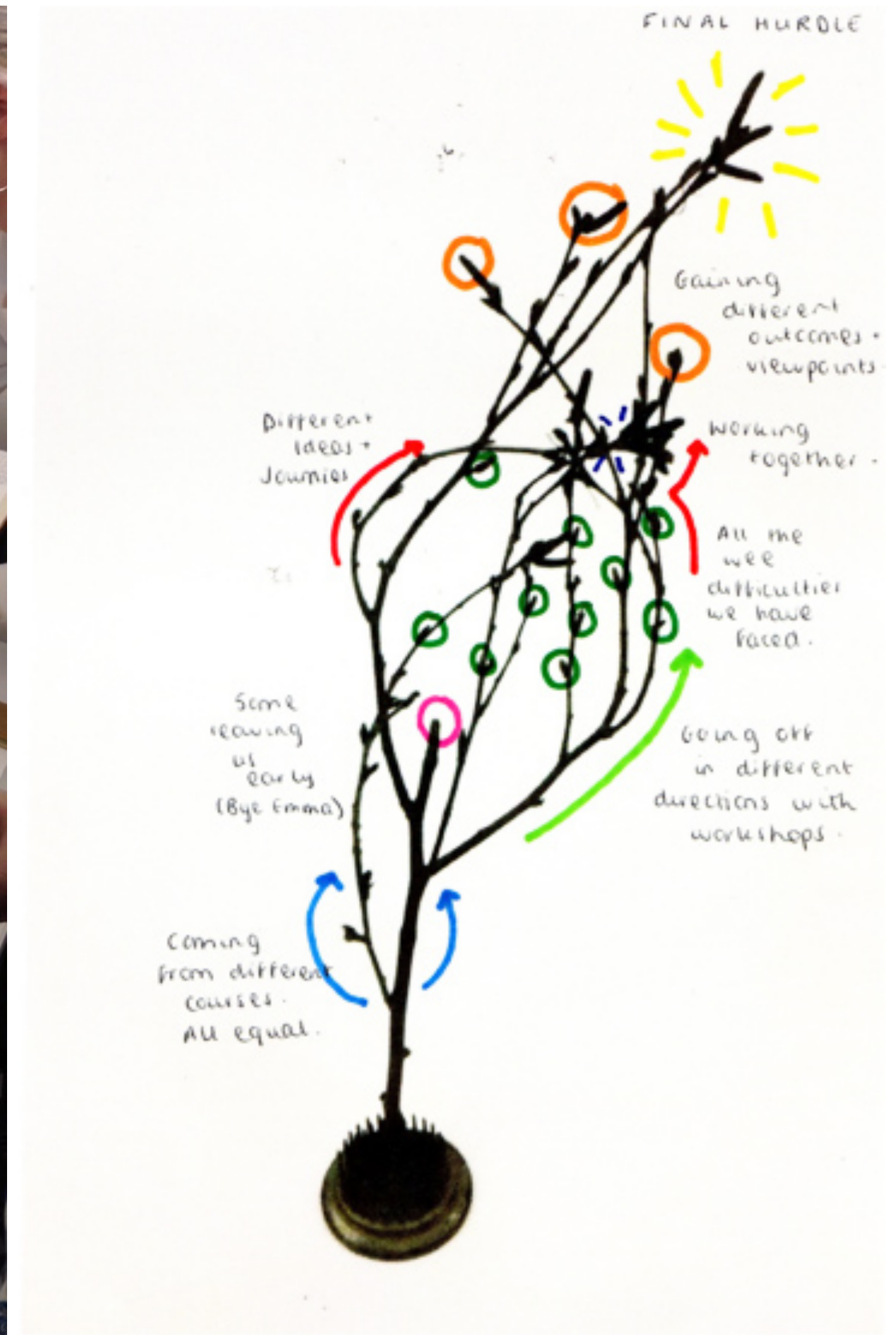
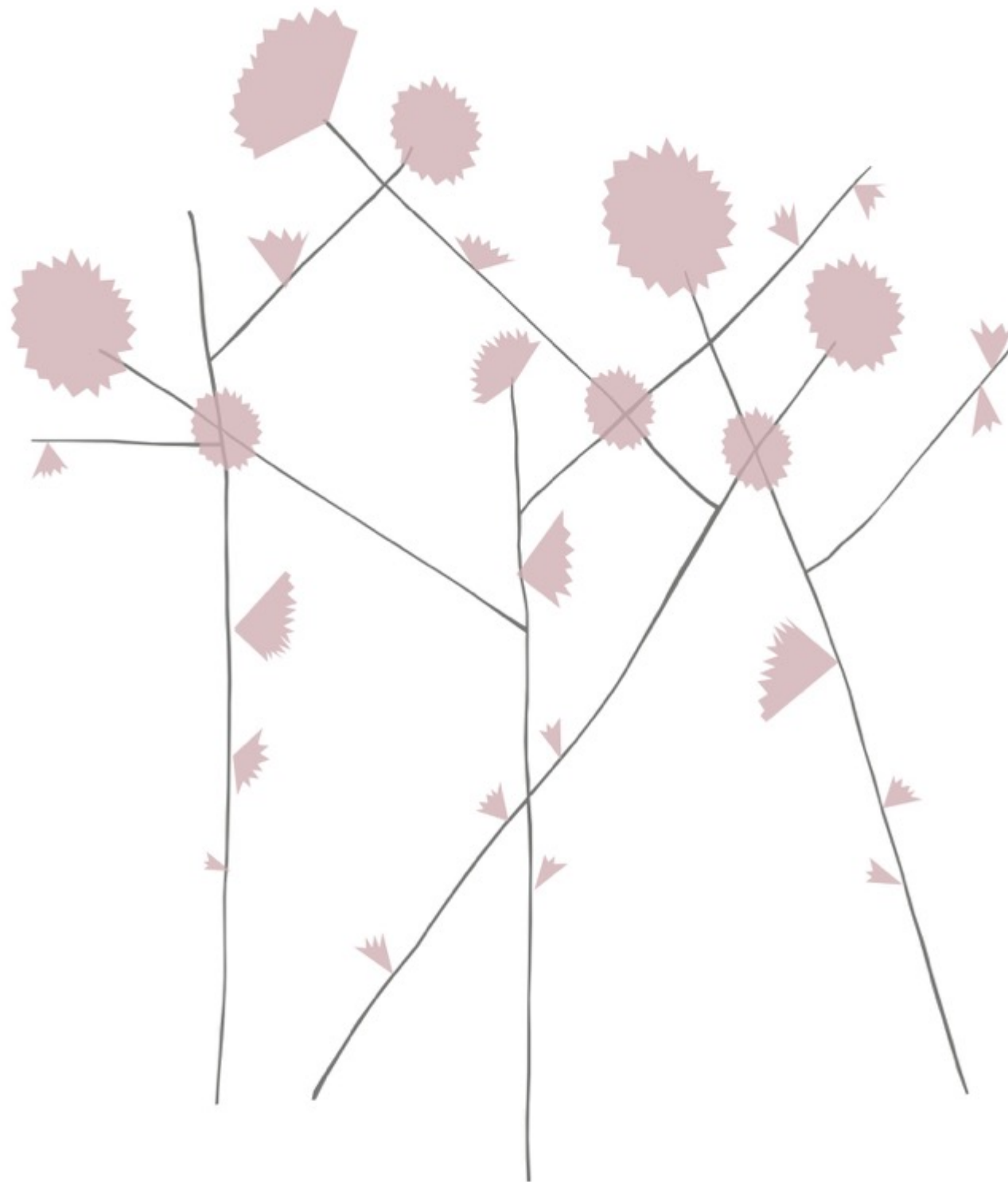


Image Source: Rachel Kelly & Student reflective Drawing 2017



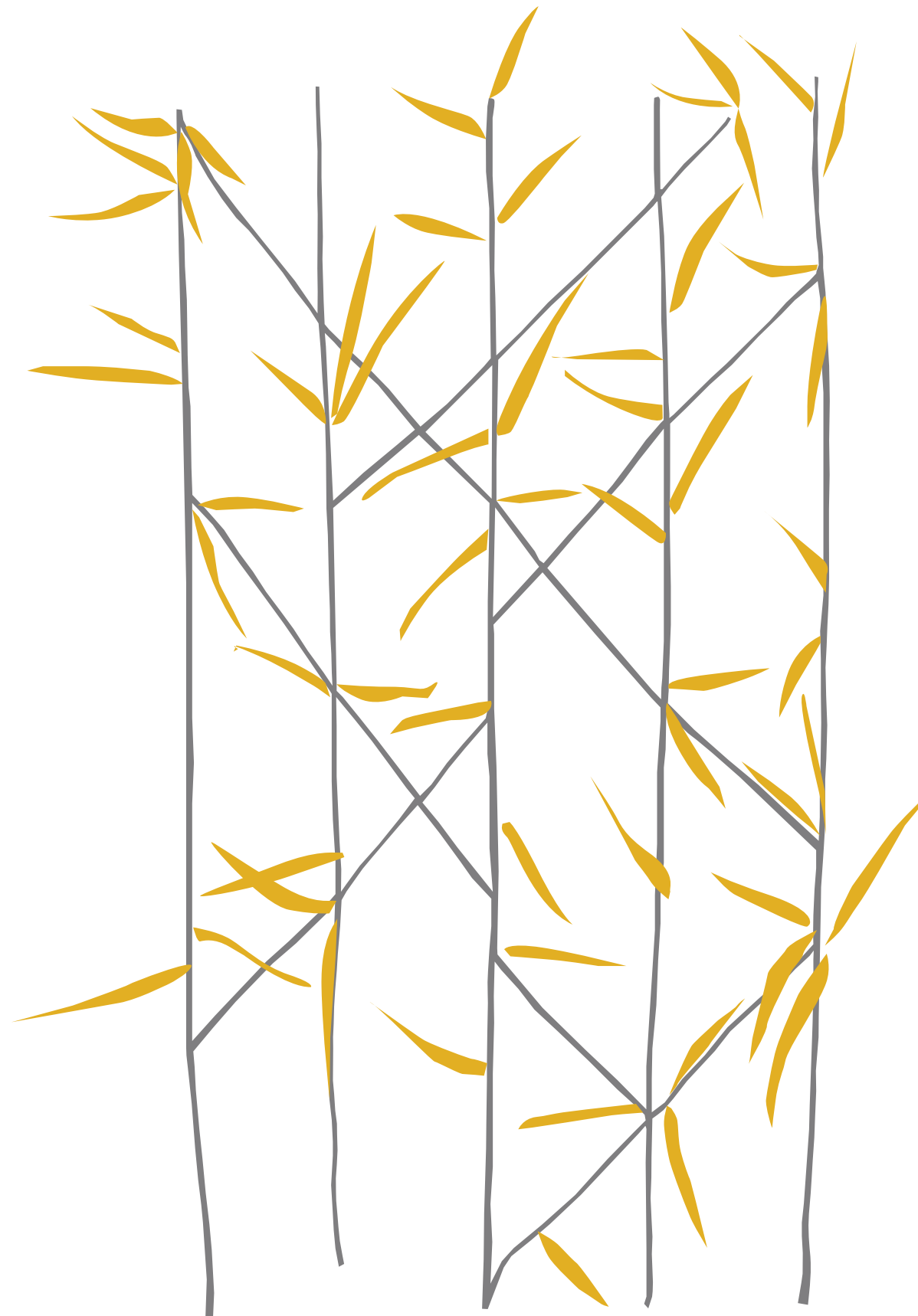
## Branching Style / Collaborative Model

Blossoming branches  
with blooms isolated,  
celebrated and visible.

There is a sense of order  
and progression with  
connections  
becoming visible as  
growth occurs and  
branches cross.

The structure becomes a  
comprehensible whole.





## Lateral Potential/ Collaborative Model

Process in parallel with a lateral potential. Working awareness of other practices, working individually yet branching into confluence.

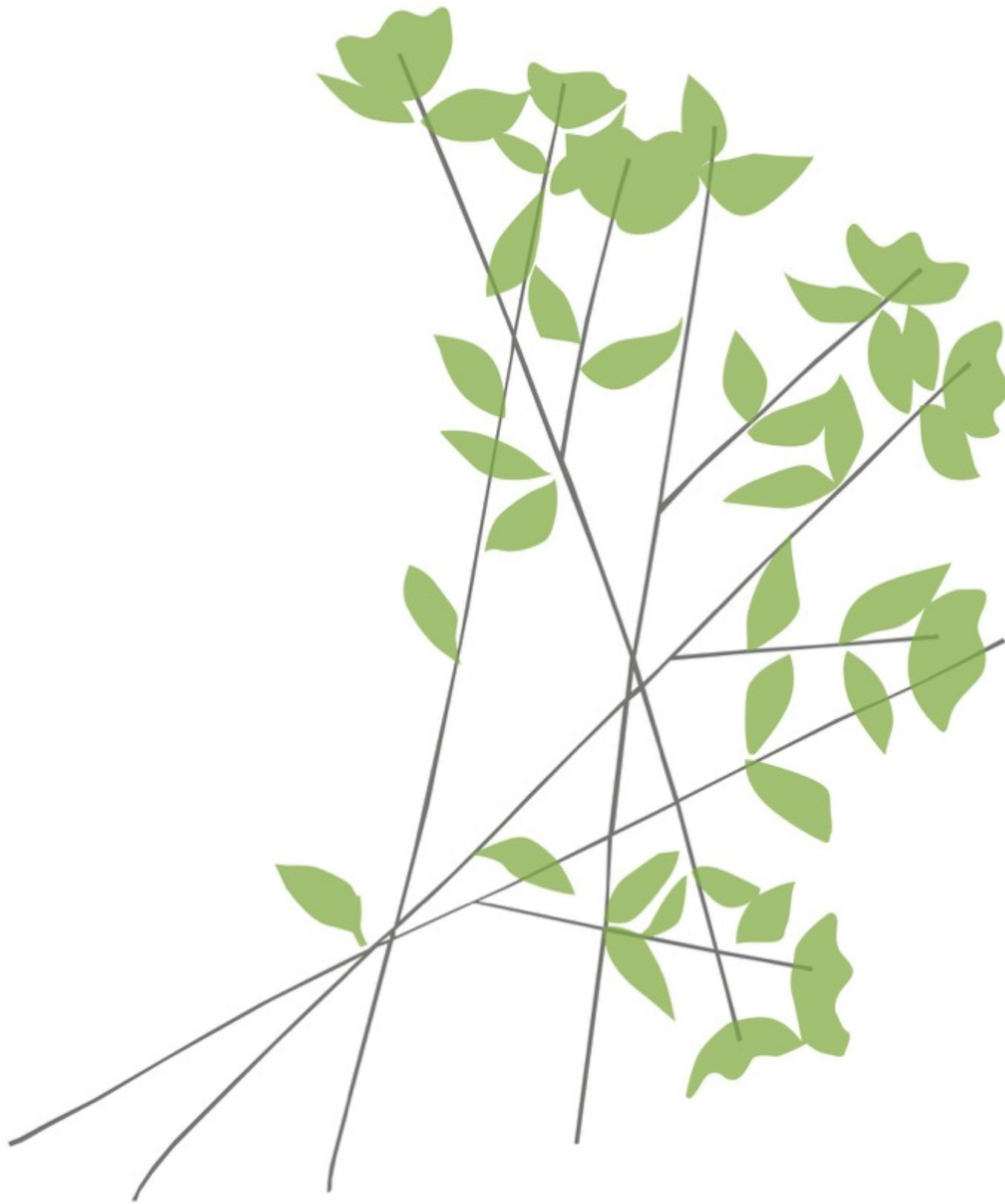
Overlaps can occur.

Gentle swaying stems weave closer, touching briefly. Leaves brush and create a lattice screen which blurs individual strands.

## Crossing Forms/ Collaborative Model

Separate strands starting from the same level yet following differing trajectories. The points where stems cross have the potential for an exchange of ideas.

These crossings are reflected in the way leaves of outputs meld into each other. The finished form reflects both individual inputs and a collective outcome.





# Conclusion

To develop collaborative pedagogy requires:

- well supported faculty and department facilitation;
- access to appropriate and stimulating shared learning contexts;
- structured delivery of teaching and learning specific to the development of collaborative practice including the use of collaborative learning tools.



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<https://vimeo.com/212587428>



Testing the Field Film documenting  
cross-faculty collaborative residency  
2017

Testing the field: Trans-disciplinary Learning in an Unfamiliar Environment



*Link:* <https://youtu.be/X6JLthrpqdU>

*Link:* <https://youtu.be/qL1DpdHoXSU>



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